

### *Who would be to blame?*

The American people themselves will be to blame. All of us would be; for all of us would fall into three groups:

Either (1) those citizens who would reject the Almighty's call to repent of their sins and to believe his saving gospel pledge; (2) those who would retain a Christian church membership but actually would have "fallen away" (2nd Thessalonians 2:3) from a genuine repentance and gospel faith; that is, they would have backslidden (Jeremiah 3:12) and would have forsaken the Lord (Jeremiah 2:13), and thus actually would belong in the first group; and (3) those who genuinely have a biblical repentance and gospel faith, yet who have failed to act as salt (Matthew 5:13), that is, who have failed to do enough to prevent this land from backsliding from the gospel, and to keep God from punishing this country.

In regards to this third group, the Holy Spirit has warned, "The time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (1st Peter 4:7). In other words, above all others God holds his believing children responsible when he would "punish the world for its sins, and the wicked for their iniquity" (Isaiah 13:11), for they should know better. They have "the mind of Christ" (1st Corinthians 2:16) and biblical knowledge which the unbelievers do not have. Hence, obeying the command of God (Ezekiel 22:30-31) and following the example of Ezra's prayer (Ezra 9:6, 10, 13, & 15), of Daniel's prayer (Daniel 9:3-27), and the spirit of Abraham's prayer (Genesis 18:22-32), believers must (1) humble themselves, (2) confess the sins of our citizens, (3) plead with God that these sins may be

forgiven, (4) pray for the peace of the land (Jeremiah 29:7), that is, ask for a stay of execution from its deserved divine punishment, and thus "make up the hedge and stand in the gap" like a firewall between God's anger and a land of wicked citizens, so that he "could not destroy it" (Ezekiel 22:30).

Just the same, how many Christians and congregations have failed to do this very thing? For example, some seek the good things of this world first of all, and not the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). Others try to serve both God and personal possessions (Matthew 6:24). Instead of being a salt (Matthew 5:13), some church members rather join the unbelievers in the sins of the flesh. "The sharp line, which God's Word draws between the world and the children of God, is in many matters almost completely erased. That is also the reason why the world does not hate us any more. We have become friends with it. We are ashamed to confess Christ to the world. The world loves its own and notices that we have moved closer to it and have become more like it. It notices that a child of the world is often more dear and more highly regarded than a brother in the faith, and that we would rather give up a brother than a friendly child of the world. The world indeed sees how similar we are to it."<sup>1</sup>

So who would be to blame for the worsening conditions in America? The sincere Christian must blame himself, repent of his negligence, ask for forgiveness, be assured of forgiveness, and then, act as salt and a firewall.

Do so!

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<sup>1</sup> C. F. W. Walther, *Old Standard Gospels*, translator Donald E. Heck (Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 1984), page 396.

Read the following piece from the devotional book by F. E. Pasche, *Daily Bread* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1926), page 292-293.

*"Beware of the Cares of This Life!"*

Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. 1 Tim.6:8.

The unbelieving children of this world have their minds fixed on nothing but the things of this world. Their sole desire is to enjoy this life, to have a good time, to eat, drink, and be merry, and to obtain wealth, to acquire an abundance of earthly possessions. These are the things which occupy their minds day and night. And how restless are they in the chase after riches! How do they scheme in order that they may obtain this world's goods and enjoy them! How often are they led by their craving for wealth and pleasure to deviate from the path of honesty, to resort to unlawful means, to trickery and fraud, to burden their consciences, and to make themselves miserable! They are ensnared in the cares of this life. And where does this earthly-mindedness lead to? The apostle says: "Whose end is destruction." Eternal damnation is the goal for which they are making.

Oh, beware, then, of the cares of this life! Provide for your immortal soul! Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness! Christians must not be earthly-minded; their hearts and hopes are to be fixed above. Heart and mind should ever become more loosed, disengaged, from the things of this world, and our

longing for the world to come should continually increase and grow. It is true that we must to a certain extent occupy our minds also with earthly things, inasmuch as we must live and provide for our own temporal welfare and that of others; but our true home is in heaven. There are things of much higher importance than the things of this present life - the things that are above, the things that can make us truly happy. Earthly things cannot make us truly happy. True happiness surely cannot dwell in the hearts of those who have no higher aim than to receive their good things in their lifetime and occupy their minds with nothing but earthly things. Truly happy are they who are *in* the world, but not *of* the world. Happy are the faithful Christians who are heavenly-minded.

*Prayer.*

Almighty God, teach us that our labor is in vain except Thou bless it in order that we may ask Thee for Thy gifts. Preserve us from fears springing from lack of trust in Thee and from worldly anxieties, that we may labor for our necessities in this life, like the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, without care. Let us be diligent in the work of our calling, and yet not form covetousness or the desire to gain wealth, but from obedience to Thee, that we may so pass through things temporal that we shall not lose the things eternal. Amen.

